



NEWS RELEASE

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Department of Health Offers Tips To Prevent Recreational Water Illnesses

BISMARCK, N.D. – Healthy swimming behaviors can greatly reduce the risk of recreational water illness from occurring and help stop germs from getting in the water, according to Julie Goplin, epidemiologist with the North Dakota Department of Health.

“Swimming in pools, lakes and rivers are a popular summer pastime in North Dakota,” Goplin said. “Ill or recently ill people who swim in recreational waters put others at risk.”

Recreational water illnesses (RWI) are spread by swallowing contaminated water from swimming pools, hot tubs, lakes, rivers and oceans. The most commonly reported RWI is diarrhea, usually caused by germs including cryptosporidium, giardia, shigella and *E. coli*. Children, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems are at greatest risk of getting sick. Other RWIs can cause skin, ear, eye and respiratory infections.

The following tips can help prevent RWIs:

- Do not swim when you have diarrhea. This is especially important for children in diapers. People diagnosed with cryptosporidium or giardia should avoid swimming for two weeks after diarrhea has ended.
- Do not swallow pool or lake water and avoid getting water in your mouth.
- Practice good hygiene by taking a shower before and after swimming and wash your hands after using the toilet or changing diapers.
- Change diapers in a restroom and not at the poolside or on the beach.
- Take children on bathroom breaks often and make sure they wash their hands properly.

For more information or to report a possible recreational water illness, contact Julie Goplin, North Dakota Department of Health, at 800.472.2180.

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